

## THE MODALITIES OF INTERVENTION IN FAILED STATES FROM A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The main aim of the thesis is to analyze from a critical perspective the modalities of intervention adopted by the international community and western institutions towards the so-called “failed states”.

Among those who work in international organizations, state-building projects often appear to be the best way to resolve the problems that afflict failed states. Most policymakers involved believe in the application, in these situations, of the principles that characterize the well-known liberal peace theory<sup>1</sup>. It is indeed commonly assumed that liberal internationalism, democratic institutions and free markets are the main ingredients to develop a successful state-building project in every circumstance. The general idea behind this approach is that liberal democratic and market reforms will bring stability to the area, which in turn will cause state stability and prosperity to the singular individuals. Unfortunately the international actors, in their attempt to improve the situation as fast as possible, often have ended up focusing too much on the economic structural reforms, ignoring the factors that could bring some real benefit to the bulk of the population, favoring instead the local political elites, which are usually among the causes of the problems that afflict failed states. As a result these projects have been characterized by delays, setbacks, inefficiencies and a marginal impact on the areas where they are applied. Local actors, often underrepresented and unheard by the international actors, have manifested in more or less open ways their opposition to the approach adopted, modifying on the ground these liberal peace projects, giving birth to hybrid forms of peace. Many times international actors have initially reacted to the presence of these local actors by just avoiding to acknowledge them, only to then develop relationships and ties with warlords, tribal leaders, local chiefs and other local actors that represent customary and traditional forms of

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1 Richmond (2009)

governance and support political, social and economic arrangements that clash with the principles that guide liberal peace building projects. Despite the fact these kind of ties can appear unnatural and dangerous, the idea offered in this thesis is that this encounter has the potential to develop new forms of peace, less influenced by a specific ideological approach, and more centered on the factors that shape that particular environment in which the international actors have decided to intervene. Even though these new forms of hybrid peace may require difficult choices and compromises that according to the theory of liberal peace could result unacceptable, such forms of peace can remove the actual “one-size-fits-all” approach, which up to now cannot boast many successes concerning the development of sustainable and acceptable forms of peace<sup>2</sup>.

The thesis will be composed by the following main sections: 1. Internal and external actors in failed states, 2. Theoretical framework: presentation of the liberal peace theory, 3. Critique to the application of the liberal peace theory in the context of failed states, 4. Alternatives to an ideology-driven approach towards failed states.

In order to present the context in which state-building projects are launched, the first section of the thesis will deal with the actors, both local and external, that act in the context of a failed state. As said above, often the international community in its peace building projects takes into consideration only a few main external actors (e.g. international organizations or state actors), without realizing the importance that other actors can have in a particular environment. Because of this reason this project will analyze not only those actors that are typically associated with peace building operations, such as western states, NGOs, representatives of the failed states etc., but also other ones, such as local militias, secret services, criminal organizations, terrorist groups, tribesmen and warlords, which must be kept into consideration in order to develop those kinds of hybrid forms of peace that, thanks to the fact they are rooted in the local context, can be stable and enduring. The roles that this range of actors play in stateless areas will be presented not only theoretically but also through the use of a set of pragmatic examples, taken from different scenarios, that can be helpful to understand in particular the relevance of those actors which are usually perceived as secondary.

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2 Richmond (2009)

The second section of the thesis will provide a theoretical framework to the entire work. In this section the theory of liberal peace will be presented. It is widely accepted that, as previously stated, most of the interventions sponsored by international actors and western states towards stateless areas are driven by the same liberal principles that represent the funding pillars of the liberal peace theory, in particular democratization, the rule of law, human rights and free markets; therefore an extended presentation of this theory is necessary to fully understand the modalities of intervention usually adopted towards failed states. Furthermore, without an adequate knowledge of its funding principles would not be possible to understand which are the main flaws that usually afflict state-building projects and, even more important, why the international organizations and the western states are so unwilling to modify their approach towards these regions of the world. A deep understanding of the liberal peace theory can help to better understand all these elements.

Given the overall critical approach of the thesis, a section of this chapter will be reserved to present the elements of the liberal peace theory from a critical perspective, relying on Richmond's works and in particular on his paper "Understanding the Liberal Peace".

After having presented the characteristics of the liberal peace theory, the third chapter will undertake a critique to the application of the principles that embody this theory in the context of failed states. In order to show the main drawbacks of an ideology-driven approach towards stateless areas, three case studies will be presented, that represent three episodes in which the international institutions or main western states have decided to intervene, following liberal principles, in order to deal with problems caused by the existence of failed states. The three cases that will be considered are the interventions in Somalia (1993), Bosnia (1995) and Afghanistan (2001). These three cases have been chosen among many others because, besides the fact they are representative of three different geographic areas, they all represent, according to Richmond, the application of the so-called "Conservative model of the liberal peace", usually associated with top-down approaches to peace building and development, which tend to the use of force and conditionality<sup>3</sup>. In particular these interventions will be considered and analyzed from different perspectives, showing the

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3 Richmond (2006)

weaknesses of this kind of approach towards failed states in respect of political reforms, economic reforms, stability, well-being of the population and local support to the intervention.

The conclusive section will present possible alternatives to the current modalities of intervention towards failed states, usually driven by liberal or neo-liberal ideology. The alternative approaches exposed will try to stress the necessity to develop projects which are not influenced by an ideology (the liberal one in particular) and which take into consideration both the importance of the local factors and all the actors that interact within these areas. Examples will be also presented in order to show that these alternative approaches are not unattainable but, on the contrary, in certain circumstances and in certain areas are already a well-established and functioning reality.